



# Communicating Management Research: (Re)writing Introductions

---

This version: 17.08.2023

## Credits

This syllabus draws on fantastic PhD course syllabi by Oliver Alexy and Damon Philipps. Moreover, I designed the structure based on inspirations from seminars I took part in myself, such as by Jay Barney, Ezra Zuckerman and Roberto Fernandez.

## Course instructors

**Name:** Amy Zhao-Ding, Ph.D.

**Room:** 2011 (Entrepreneurship Center in Garching, Lichtenbergstr. 6)

**Tel.:** +49 15140535013

**e-mail:** [amy.zhaoding@tum.de](mailto:amy.zhaoding@tum.de)



## Course description

### Goal

This course is designed to help (in particular) junior scholars in the field of management gain exposure and experience with techniques on the written communication of academic work, specifically, how to write interesting and important introductions. The course requires reading and the discussion of readings, but it is fundamentally a “learning-by-doing” course. I hope to have you undergo an iterative process where you a) communicate your research, b) receive feedback, c) revise your communication, and then cycle through this process again in your own journey. The goal of this course is to start you on the path of being a great communicator of your research and increase the odds of publishing in a top journal. Here, top journal implies *primarily* the “Top 6” (AMJ, AMR, ASQ, ManSci, OrgSci, SMJ), the leading journals in other disciplines (e.g., AJS, ASR, MISQ, Nature, Science...), and also, though to a lesser degree, top field journals that are often part of the “FT 50” – a list of 50 strong management journals listed by the Financial Times. The central question for publishing in these top journals is, usually, how can I make a “theoretical contribution?” Therefore, this course aims to help you clarify your core ideas and craft the introduction so that you articulate the contribution.

### Target audience, capacity, and selection criteria

We cordially invite applications from doctoral students and post-docs (and possibly also junior faculty) who strive to publish in the leading of our discipline and their field. To take the most out of this course, we highly recommend you bring a working paper draft. At the very least, you will need a well-developed research idea that you will be able to develop into some form of paper draft as part of the course. Given this course will be highly interactive and feature intense, personal coaching, seating will be limited to 6-8 people. In case we should receive more applications than we have seats, preference will be given to candidates with more advanced papers (e.g., R&Rs) in particular in the Top 6; those working in areas that we have expertise (roughly speaking: firm-level qualitative, quantitative, or conceptual papers fitting into the TIM, STR, OMT, or ENT divisions of the Academy of Management); and, in particular, individuals who have received prior training in theory, theorizing, methodology, the philosophy of science, and/or academic writing. Among Ph.D. student applications, if otherwise qualified equally, we will prioritize individuals accepted to the Academic Training Program.



### Application Process

Please sign up for the course via email to [amy.zhaoding@tum.de](mailto:amy.zhaoding@tum.de) by **Januar 8, 2024**, with your up-to-date academic resume and a paragraph introducing your research interest and stage of the paper we will discuss during the course. Also email me if you have any questions regarding the course.

## Course objectives

### Knowledge Objectives

In this course, we strive to help you see what it takes to make a meaningful contribution that advances management scholarship broadly. In doing so, you should not only master your understanding of what “theory” and “contribution” are, but a clearer picture of the process by which they are created and evaluated.

### Skills Objectives

- Improve diagnostic, analytical, and verbal skills via class and group discussions
- Enhance critical thinking and interpretation skills
- Build-up or improve writing and review(er)-management skills

### Learning Objectives

At the end of this course, students will be able to demonstrate understanding, critical assessment and application of the following:

- How to clearly convey that a paper is interesting and articulate the theoretical contribution
- How to interpret and incorporate reviewer comments in revisions

## Preliminary Schedule

All courses take place at the Entrepreneurship Research Institute (Building 5433) at Garching (Room 2001), from 10:00am-6:15 pm (changes subject to the number of students enrolled). Below are the dates and topics for the sessions, please see “Course Outline” for details on each session’s content and required preparations.

Session	Date	Topic
1	tba	What makes good theory? The clarification of ideas
2	tba	How to make a contribution? The craft of introduction: I
3	tba	How to make a contribution? The craft of introduction: II

## Assessment

For participants, the course will be worth at least 3 ECTS. Given the completely interactive nature of this course, attendance and participation are mandatory, and not properly excused absence or poor preparation may likely lead to your being excluded from the course. Note also how you will be pass-fail graded on this course based on four elements, *all of which* you need to pass:

- Your assignments for all three sessions:
  - Reaction paper (1-2 pages, single space) for the readings in session 1, by **tba**
  - The first draft of introduction for the paper presented in session 1, by **tba**
  - Feedback for 2 other colleagues’ introductions, by **tba**
  - Reflection paper (1-2 pages, single space) for the feedback received on the introduction, by **tba**
  - The revised, second draft of introduction, by **tba**



- Your paper presentation in session 1
- Your participation and interaction throughout the course

## Course outline

### Session 1. What makes good theory? The clarification of ideas

- Readings (each person leads the discussion of 1-2 paper)
  - Davis, M. 1971. **That's interesting!** *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*, 1: 309-344.
  - (!) Whetten, D. 1989. **What constitutes a theoretical contribution?** *Academy of Management Review*, 4: 490-495.
  - Bacharach, S.B. 1989. **Organizational theories: Some criteria for evaluation.** *Academy of Management Review*, 14: 496 – 515
  - (!) Daft, R., 1995. **Why I recommended that your manuscript be rejected and what you can do about it.** In L.L. Cummings and Peter J. Frost, *Publishing in the Organizational Sciences*. Thousand Oaks: Sage, pp. 164-182.
  - Sutton, R.I., Staw, B.M. (1995). **What theory is not.** *Administrative Science Quarterly* 40: 371-384
  - Weick, K. 1995. **What theory is not, theorizing is.** *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 40: 385-390.
  - DiMaggio, P. 1995. **Comments on "what theory is not."** *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 40: 391-397.
  - Cochrane, J. H. 2005. **Writing tips for PhD students.** [https://faculty.chicagobooth.edu/john.cochrane/research/papers/phd\\_paper\\_writing.pdf](https://faculty.chicagobooth.edu/john.cochrane/research/papers/phd_paper_writing.pdf)
  - Bem, D. J. (2003). **Writing the empirical journal articles.** <https://psychology.yale.edu/sites/default/files/bemempirical.pdf>
  - Zuckerman, E.W. 2008. **Tips for article writers.** [https://mitmgmtfaculty.mit.edu/esivan/reviews\\_essays/](https://mitmgmtfaculty.mit.edu/esivan/reviews_essays/)
  - Zuckerman, E.W. 2017. **On Genre: A Few More Tips to Article-Writers.** [https://mitmgmtfaculty.mit.edu/esivan/reviews\\_essays/](https://mitmgmtfaculty.mit.edu/esivan/reviews_essays/)
  - Johanson, L. M. (2007). **Sitting in Your Reader's Chair: Attending to Your Academic Sensemakers.** *Journal of Management Inquiry*, 16(3), 290–294. (see <https://asqblog.com/2015/04/29/behind-the-scenes-with-asq-managing-editor-linda-johanson/> for an interview with the author)
  - *Administrative Science Quarterly* Editorial Office, 2017. **Writing tips for ASQ submissions.** <https://asqblog.com/2017/11/22/thanksgiving-special-writing-tips-for-asq-submissions/>
  - Barney, J. 2018. **Editor's Comments: Positioning a Theory Paper for Publication.** *Academy of Management Review*, 43, 345–348
  - (!) [https://hwpi.harvard.edu/files/faculty-diversity/files/stylish\\_academic\\_writing.pdf](https://hwpi.harvard.edu/files/faculty-diversity/files/stylish_academic_writing.pdf)
  -
- Submit a reaction paper (1-2 pages, single space) for the readings by **August 16**, think about the connections between the papers and identify challenges to use these principles in paper writing
  - We will discuss the readings in class
- Present a paper (15min presentation + 5min Q&A each), preferably send the slides to me by **August 16**

### Session 2. How to make a contribution? The craft of introduction: I

- Send the first draft of introduction for the paper presented to me and 2 other colleagues by **August 24**
- Submit feedback about others' introductions by **August 30**
  - We will discuss each introduction and the feedback in class to clarify the core argument and crystalize the contribution of the papers
- Bring in 1-2 very good or bad introductions published in academic journals to class



- We will sample these introductions and discuss what is good/bad about these examples

### **Session 3. How to make a contribution? The craft of introduction: II**

- Submit a reflection paper (1-2 pages, single space) on the feedback received about the introduction by **September 10**
  - We will discuss the reflection paper with an emphasis on how to bolster the strong part and improve the weak part of the introduction
- Submit the revised, second draft of introduction by **September 10**
  - We will evaluate progress of the second draft and revise some of the introductions together